

## **Amherst Budget Coordinating Group Summary Points – January 27, 2014**

At our January 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, the members of the Budget Coordinating Group agreed that the following points would be conveyed to our home boards and committees:

1. That key elements of the FY15 State budget process thus far are:
  - a) The Governor's budget proposal would result in \$292,182 less in net local aid for Amherst than original projections. It recommended no increase for State Aid and a substantial increase in Charter School assessments, which staff are reviewing and hope to reduce. House Speaker Robert DeLeo has said that the House budget would propose more local aid than the Governor's budget. The Massachusetts Municipal Association is pushing for the House to provide a local aid resolution in March to help communities plan accordingly.
  - b) Based on the formulas used for determining each community's share of the different aid categories, Amherst would benefit most from an increase in Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA,) and that is where our focus with local representatives and other Beacon Hill budget officials should be.
2. That key elements of the FY15 local budget process thus far are:
  - a) The Town's budget proposal meets the Finance Committee's 2.7% budget guidelines and utilizes new recurring revenue sources to cover implementation of the new Rental Permitting Bylaw and increases fire/ambulance staffing. The status of the Town's funding request under the Community Development Block Grant program, and if and how to address a shortfall in CDBG funds for social service agencies, remains an uncertainty. The budget proposal is available on the budget section of the Town web site.
  - b) The Library's budget proposal meets the Finance Committee's 2.7% budget guidelines. A major fiscal consideration is future renovation and expansion of the Jones Library, for which a preliminary planning and design grant is being sought in FY15. If successful, this will launch a multi-year effort financing effort to for the eventual construction. The full budget proposal is available on the budget section of the Library web site, and the Library Director is available to anyone who wants more information on the grant application.
  - c) The Regional Schools' budget proposal is being presented to the Regional School Committee on Jan. 28<sup>th</sup>; the elementary schools' budget is being presented to the Amherst School Committee on Feb 4<sup>th</sup>. Both will then be made available on the Schools' web site.
  - d) Uncertainty about State aid and the late timing of the House budget proposal suggests that it may be necessary to schedule consideration of the Town Meeting budget articles after the zoning articles, to allow for as much information as possible to be known and incorporated in to the Finance Committee's Report to Town Meeting.
3. Calendar: The next Four Towns meeting is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, February 8<sup>th</sup>. Confirmation or a new date will be circulated by the Superintendent soon. The next BCG meeting will be Thursday, February 27<sup>th</sup> at 8:15 a.m.